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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Participating schools have students who come predominantely from a low socio-economic and culturally disadvantaged background. Among several objectives is the awakening of community responsibility through fostering closer ties between school and home. The community program is activated by school-community co-ordinators who serve as liaison agents between school and home. These persons are bi-lingualists in certain communities where it is helpful. Remedial, tutorial, and enrichment programs are offered with competent paid teachers after school, on Saturdays, and during the summer. Regular teachers receive special in-service training from language arts consultants weekly while their classes participate in literature programs. A language arts expert is trained in each school. A specially chosen team from each school is paid to attend a five week workshop each summer. Consultants work with new teachers.

The fundamental objectives of the Project are to: raise achievement levels, raise aspirational levels, discover latent talent and abilities, and awaken community responsibility. Thus, on-going at the same time are a community and school program.

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GREAT CITIES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY CO-ORDINATING TEAM
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

SOME UNIQUE FEATURES

The Philadelphia Great Cities School Improvement Program is located in the heart of an area marked for urban renewal. Seven elementary schools and one junior high school are involved. The pupils come to school from homes having a low socio-economic background, a low degree of cultural stimulation, poor health conditions, disoriented family patterns, high migratory tendencies, low aspirational levels, and inadequacy in the communication skills - conditions which produce children who lack the necessary background for normal learning progress.

Objectives

The fundamental purposes of the Project are to: raise achievement levels, raise aspirational levels, discover latent talent and abilities, and awaken community responsibility through fostering closer ties between home and school.

Community Program

To help achieve our goals a two-pronged attack has been launched - a wide-range community program and an intensive, enriched school program. The community program includes the hiring of school-community co-ordinators to act as liaison agents between school and home. They have helped activate parents to work in homework centers (homes where children gather to study under adult guidance after school), home and school committees, health committees, Saturday cultural trips with groups of children, discussion groups, civic associations, and community councils. In two of the schools, where there is a large Spanish-speaking population, the Project added bilingual co-ordinators. Under their leadership, the Spanish-speaking parents have established strong bonds with the schools and civic community betterment organizations have been organized.

School Program

The program has extended the school day and the school week. Remedial, tutorial, and enrichment programs with competent paid teachers are offered after school. Cultural enrichment trips are offered on Saturdays with transportation provided. The school year was extended by organizing enrichment opportunities during the summer.

The daily regular school program has also been affected. On-the-job in-service training for teachers is provided to train the many inexperienced teachers and to retrain the experienced ones in new approaches and new techniques. Teachers are released from their classes in grade groups, once a week, to receive training from language arts consultants especially assigned to the Project. The consultants not only train the teachers and demonstrate in classrooms, but also prepare experimental language arts materials for pupils. Experimental curriculum materials in beginning reading, developmental reading, literature, spelling, handwriting, and functional and creative writing have been introduced.

While the teachers receive in-service training, their classes participate in a carefully structured literature program. This is a program rich in story-telling, literature films, and records. Large sums of Project money have been spent to provide generous additional supplies of books and materials to the participating schools.

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The school language arts teacher is specially chosen and is trained to become a language arts expert in each school. She works with groups of non-verbal primary youngsters in a rich listening, speaking and reading readiness program; and with ungraded groups of older children of high potential in a special enrichment program. She also spends part of each day demonstrating in classrooms and helping teachers who request her services. Her room is a language arts center for the entire school. These teachers receive special training from the language arts consultants throughout the year and during the summer.

Each summer, a team from each participating school, consisting of the principal, counseling teacher, language arts teacher, school-community co-ordinator, and representative members of the faculty, is paid to attend a five-week workshop. The workshop meetings have proven to be both informational and inspirational. Summer sessions have also been used for purposes of evaluation and planning. During the year, the teams meet on one Saturday morning of every month for similar purposes.

In addition to the extra help in language arts, the Project has also had assigned to it two consultants who work with new teachers in the area of classroom management and planning and a newly assigned arithmetic consultant.

The progress made in the Project has been encouraging. Good results have been noted in pupil achievement, faculty morale, in-service education, and closer co-ordination of the schools and the communities they serve.

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November 1, 1962